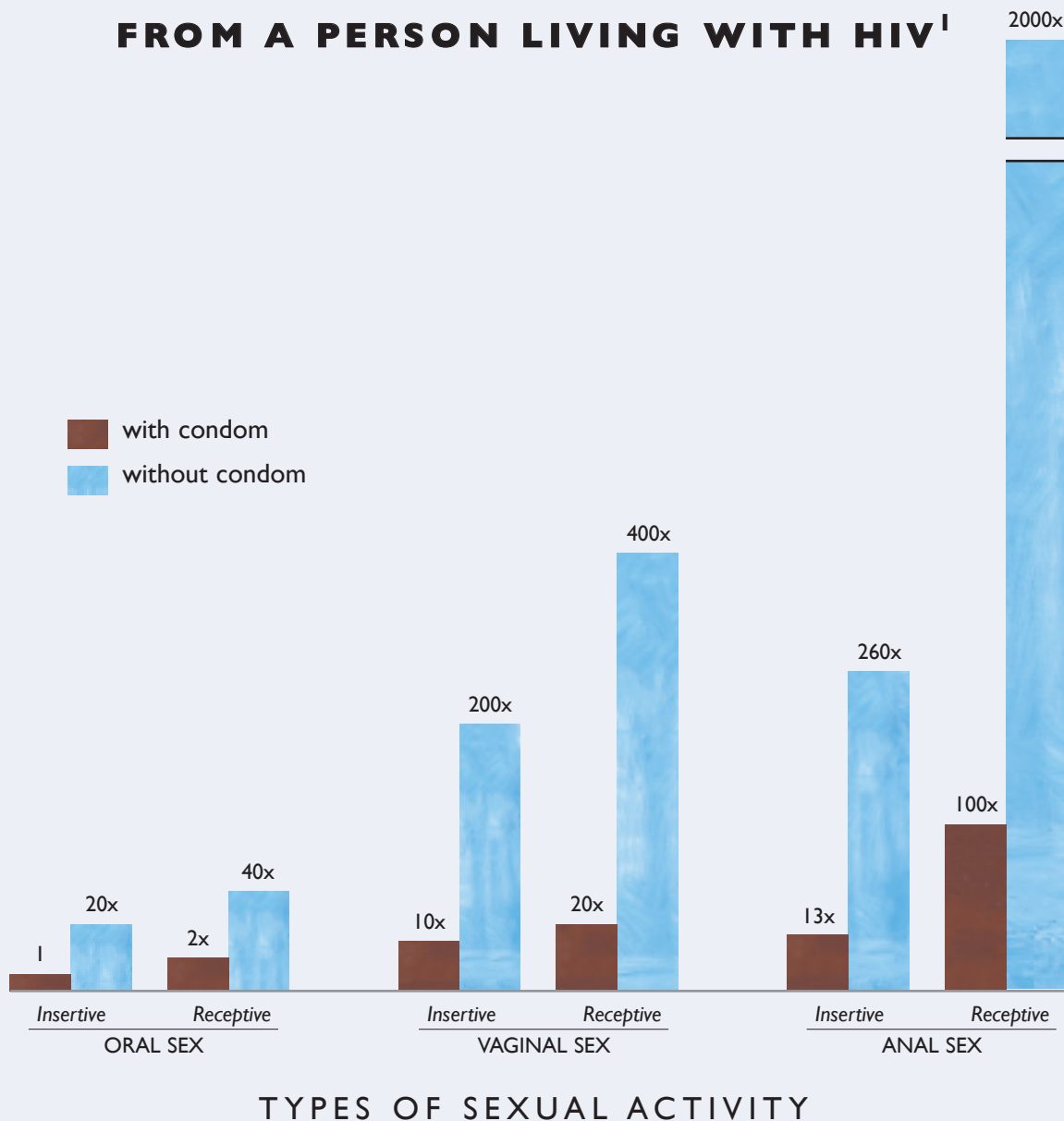


RELATIVE RISK FOR TRANSMISSION FROM A PERSON LIVING WITH HIV¹



Decisions about sexual activity and condom use have a major effect on the risk for HIV transmission.

That's why it's so important to always practice safe sex.

This chart shows how the relative risk for a person living with HIV transmitting HIV to a person without the disease varies according to sexual activity and condom use. For example, insertive oral sex with a condom has a low risk for HIV transmission.

But receptive anal sex without a condom is 2,000 times riskier. Not having sex is the best way to protect against the transmission of HIV. But if you are having sex, it's important to know that all sex is not the same when it comes to transmitting HIV.^{1,2}



ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS YOUR PATIENTS MIGHT ASK³⁻⁶

Q: How does HIV cause AIDS?

A: HIV destroys certain kinds of blood cells (called CD4 cells) that are important to your immune system, which is what protects your body from disease. Without these cells, you become susceptible to many infections and some cancers.

Q: How is HIV spread?

A: The most common way that HIV is spread is sexual activity (anal, vaginal, or oral) with a person living with HIV. Sharing needles or works with a person living with HIV can also spread the disease. HIV can also be spread through transfusion of infected blood or blood products, though that risk is very low in the United States. Mothers with HIV can spread it to their babies before or during birth. HIV can also be spread through breast milk. Mothers with HIV should not breastfeed their babies.

Q: Can I pass HIV to someone else by doing things like shaking hands?

A: No. HIV is not spread through everyday contact at school, work, or in social settings. HIV cannot be caught from things like a handshake, a doorknob, a pet, or food. The virus does not live long outside the body.

Q: If I am living with HIV and pregnant, will my baby have HIV too?

A: Not necessarily. If you are treated with HIV drugs early in the pregnancy, the risk of passing the virus to your baby can be 2% or less. Even if you don't receive the HIV drugs until you are in labor, the chances of transmission are much lower than if you aren't treated at all. It's also important to remember that HIV can be spread through breast milk. Mothers with HIV should not breastfeed their babies.

Q: Is there a connection between HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)?

A: Yes. If you become infected with another STD (such as syphilis, gonorrhea, or herpes), you are three to five times more likely to pass HIV to someone else than if you don't have another STD.

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